

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 49-82 are now active in this application, claims 1-48 having been cancelled. New claim 49 corresponds to the combination of original claims 1 and 11 and new claim 69 corresponds to the combination of original claims 16 and 25. The dependent claims 50-68 and 70-82 correspond to dependent claims previously present in the application, with dependencies corrected for the new independent claims. No new matter has been added by this amendment.

As Applicants have now amended the claims to remove certain limitations that had been added during earlier prosecution and have added the new limitation that the fabric contains a binder or a product of carbonization of the binder in an amount of **from 0.01 to 7%** by weight and comprises carbonaceous fibers bonded to one another with the binder or its carbonization product. (the previous claims contained from 10-40% by weight of the binder or product of carbonization of the binder).

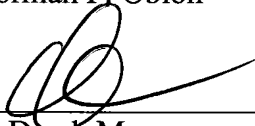
None of the cited references disclose or suggest the preparation of a conductive carbonaceous-fiber fabric as claimed with the amount of binder within the now claimed range of binder. Further, even if the Examiner deems that the references previously cited would make the invention obvious, there is nothing in the references to lead one of ordinary skill to expect that a conductive carbonaceous fiber fabric as required in the present invention would have the improved properties seen, as demonstrated in Table 1 of the present application. As shown in that Table, when the amount of binder or carbonization product of the binder is limited to from 0.01 to 7% by weight, the combined properties including volume resistivity, bending resistance, fluff grade of carbon fiber sheet, and gas permeability are significantly improved overall compared to use of higher amounts of binder or the absence of binder. (Applicants note that Examples 6-9 of Table 1 are no longer within the range of the present invention). Thus, the present invention can be regarded as an improvement invention.

Applicants note that a previous reference used by the Examiner was Mitchell (US 4,396,663) which describes a carbon composite article having a binder present in an amount of from 1 to 15% by weight. However, there is nothing within Mitchell to suggest that that one can limiting the binder to be from 0.01 to 7% by weight and form a conductive carbonaceous fiber sheet having the properties shown by the present invention in Table 1. In fact, as shown in Table 1, when the amount of binder is 7.9% (just above the maximum allowed by the present invention, but still within Mitchell's range), the resulting sheet has significantly reduced gas permeability relative to the present invention. Accordingly, it is not believed that Mitchell can be used to render the present invention unpatentable.

Applicants submit that the application is now in condition for allowance and early notification of such action is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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